

Message Points

June 30, 2004

- 650,000 Mississippians receive DHS benefits (23% of all Mississippians). 3,400 Mississippians are employed at DHS (10% of all non-education state employees). DHS distributes more than \$800 million annually into Mississippi's economy.
- The only item in the Special Session call is DHS – nothing else can legally be considered (Senate attorneys have already researched the subject and reached that conclusion.) Trying to amend the special session call will cause legal chaos and jeopardize DHS before its midnight deadline.
- Do not assume that the Governor will simply run DHS by executive order if it is not reauthorized before midnight. The Governor has tried three times to save DHS. He has called two special sessions – in one of them the House failed to pass an unamended reauthorization bill. He has also inquired about running DHS by executive order, but the AG has said that is not allowed -- even though it has been before (Fordice 1994). The Governor has tried every option available to him to save DHS.
- A “termination of benefits” letter has been drafted by DHS and is ready to be sent out to 23% of our state's population. I am not going to monkey around with a bill that saves benefits for 650,000 people – most of whom are women and children.
- I told the Governor the PLADs beneficiaries didn't have enough time to transition to Medicare – so the Governor granted my request and extended the

deadline. So far I have been able to accomplish 11 weeks more than any of the ranting and raving of some of my colleagues.

- Some legislators voted for the Medicaid Reform Act – now they say it was all bad. Some legislators said they just wanted an extension for PLADs beneficiaries – now there is one and they say it's not good enough. Some legislators say they care about the 65,000 PLADs beneficiaries – but they are willing to let benefits evaporate for 650,000 Mississippians.
- Halloween is over. It is time to quit enflaming people and start informing people. Now that we have additional time to get these people proper coverage, I hope we can all work to educate PLADs recipients about their encouraging prescription coverage options. Instead of making political speeches at rallies, I want to work one-on-one with my constituents to get them the prescription drug coverage they need.
- Medicaid is setting up a special hotline for legislators until September 15 that will allow lawmakers to immediately transfer PLADs constituents with concerns to an awaiting, live Medicaid caseworker. This will allow legislators to better serve their constituents.
- Lost in the debate is this: the Medicaid Reform Act is the strongest anti-fraud legislation we have ever passed. Mississippi can now redetermine eligibility once-a-year -- in person -- so we can spot Medicaid recipients who have no business being on Medicaid. This will free up more money for the truly needy.
- Mississippi would not have made budget this year if the Medicaid Reform Act had not been passed.

Medicaid state spending has doubled in five years – the biggest growth of any state expenditure. Voting for massive expansions in Medicaid has been fun in recent years at the Legislature – but now the bill has come due.

- Where does the money come from to keep 6% of our Medicaid population on both Medicaid and Medicare benefits? Most Medicaid recipients don't get the extra Medicare coverage. Should we cut education? Roads? If not, what? Those wanting to revisit their vote should show a funding plan – all \$41 million worth. Our budget is bare. The tobacco trust fund is evaporating. Raising cigarette taxes just punishes poor people – many of them PLADs recipients. (The average Mississippi smoker makes \$7,000 a year less than the average Mississippi non-smoker.)
- The newly-announced “Medicaid-to-Medicare Transition Plan” is solid, here's why:

Time to Transition

(Now there is plenty of time to do it right.)

An administrative delay in implementation of the shift from Medicaid to Medicare for PLADs beneficiaries – from July 1 to September 15, 2004 – an additional 11 weeks of transition time.

Early Enrollment

(No other state is allowed to let their recipients do this.)

Federal permission to allow Mississippi PLADs beneficiaries an exclusive advance enrollment opportunity for Medicare prescription drug cards and some patient assistance programs.

Sign-Up Assistance

(Medicaid will now call PLADs, instead of waiting on PLADs to call Medicaid.)

Implementation of a 77 day public education plan to contact all 47,000 PLADs beneficiaries to assist them with their enrollment in the correct prescription plans.

Good News for At-Risk Beneficiaries

(18,000 will get to stay on Medicaid with these waivers.)

Additional time for continued positive waiver negotiations with federal officials which will allow 18,000 at-risk beneficiaries to remain on Medicaid.